

Voluntary Amendments to Claim 3 and Claim 15

Claim 3 has been amended in a non-limiting manner to clarify the relationship between the recited detent and stay and the needle component and blunting component recited in claim 1. The voluntary amendment to claim 15 is made simply to prevent the claim from referring to a previously canceled claim.

Rejection of Claims 1-9 and 11-16 Under 35 U.S.C. 102

Claims 1-9 and 11-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102, as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 4,828,547 to Sahi et al.

Sahi et al shows a basic self-blunting needle assembly that includes a blunting member 36 comprising a probe 40 disposed internally of the needle 32 that extends from base portion 16a. The probe 40 is mounted on a piston 38 which resides within the base portion 16a of the needle.

Claim 1 differs from what is shown in Sahi et al because the claim specifies that the blunting member is mounted on a shuttle that is configured to extend outside the fluid chamber defined by the needle component. This is in direct contrast to what is shown by Sahi et al, in which the entire blunting structure (probe 40 and piston 38) is disposed entirely within the chamber defined by the needle component. This difference is significant because by extending the shuttle member to the outside of the fluid chamber, the invention provides a way by which the user can manipulate the shuttle member and the blunting probe thereon, to sharpen the assembly when desired. In contrast, Sahi et al shows only that the blunting member is fully contained within the needle component and is only advanced, to blunt the syringe, upon depressing the plunger. Since Sahi et al fails to teach or suggest configuring a needle assembly so that the blunting member shuttle extends outside the fluid chamber to permit the user to sharpen the device, as is permitted by the claimed invention, claim 1 is both novel relative to Sahi et al and non-obvious.

Claim 3, as amended, provides a further patentable distinction over Sahi et al, even relative to claim 1. Claim 3 specifies a detent and a stay in the needle assembly that is movable from a position that prevents the assembly from being sharpened to a position that permits sharpening. In contrast, Sahi et al shows only that the detents 44 engage locking means (i.e., grooves) 50 as the blunting member moves into the blunting position; there is no indication that the detents can move to a position that will allow the blunting member to move back, so

that the syringe can be re-sharpened. Thus, claim 3 defines a feature nowhere taught or suggested by Sahi et al.

Claims 9 and 16 define a further patentable distinction over Sahi et al and even over claim 3 by stating that the detent comprises a coupling site for engagement by an accessory device. No such feature is shown in the detents of the blunting component in Sahi et al.

Rejection of Claims 10 and 17 Under 35 U.S.C. 103

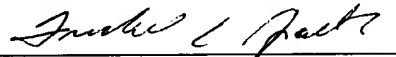
Claims 10 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being obvious over Sahi et al in view of U.S. Patent 6,056,726 to Isaacson.

Isaacson is cited for teaching the use of a flash chamber, and the Examiner states that it would be obvious to incorporate the teachings from Isaacson into the device shown by Sahi et al.

Claims 10 and 17 are allowable at least because they depend from an allowable base claim, claim 11.

Each of the stated grounds of rejection have been addressed or traversed. Re-examination and reconsideration of the rejected claims is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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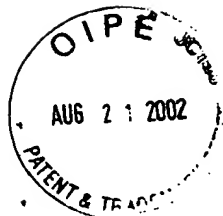
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COPY OF CLAIMS SHOWING AMENDMENTS

(Added material is underlined, deleted material is bracketed.)

3. (Amended) The needle assembly of claim 1 comprising a detent and a stay engagement between the needle component and the blunting component, the detent being movable between (i) a locking position in which it may bear against the stay and prevent the needle assembly from moving to the sharpened configuration and (ii) an unlocked position which permits the needle assembly to move to the sharpened configuration.

6. (Amended) The needle assembly of any one of claims 1, 2, 3 or 4 wherein the shuttle member is perforated to permit fluid flow from [an] the rearward open end of the blunting probe therein to the fluid chamber.

11. (Amended) A blunable needle assembly comprising:

a needle component comprising a housing and a needle cannula mounted in the housing, the needle cannula having a sharp tip; and

a blunting component comprising a shuttle member and a blunting probe mounted on the shuttle member, the shuttle member defining a fluid chamber and an access port for fluid flow, and the blunting probe having a blunt tip and a rearward end open to the fluid chamber;

wherein the blunting probe is disposed within the needle cannula and the needle component and the blunting component are configured for movement from a sharpened configuration to locking engagement in a blunted configuration with a detent and stay engagement between them, the detent being movable between (i) a locking position in which it may bear against the stay and prevent the needle assembly from moving to the sharpened configuration and (ii) an unlocked position which permits the needle assembly to move to the sharpened configuration.

15. (Amended) The needle assembly of claim 11 [13] wherein the shuttle member comprises the movable detent.

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